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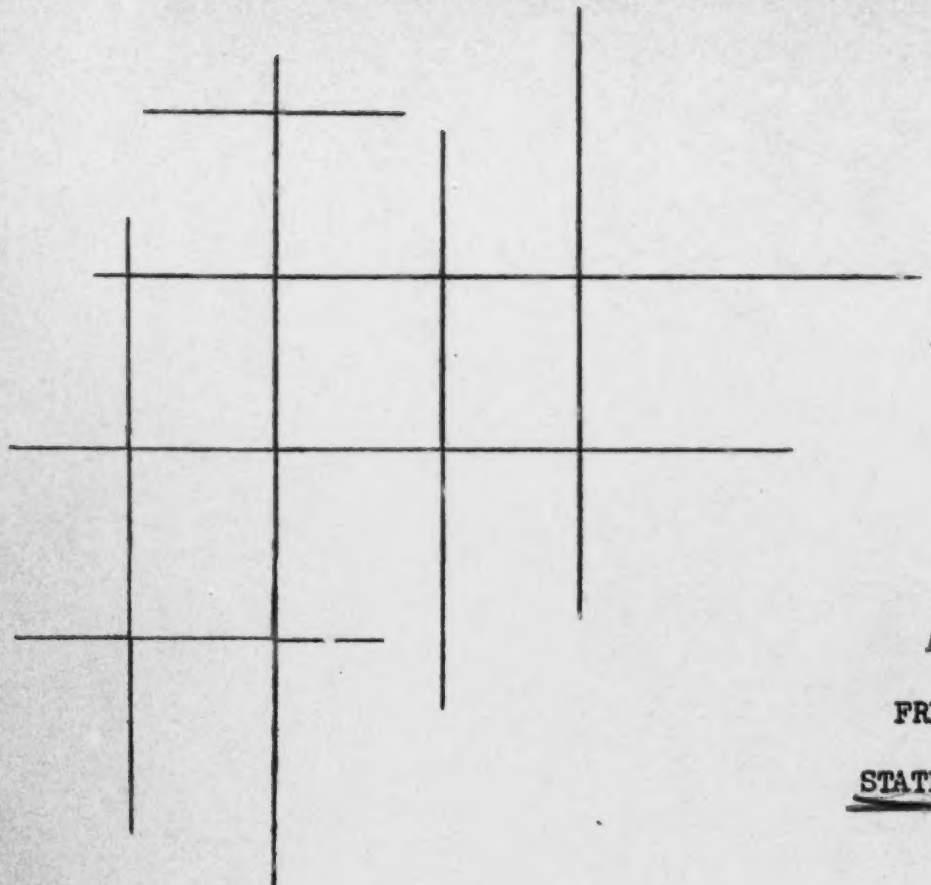

A FOUR-YEAR STUDY OF THE FRESHMAN CLASS ENTERING THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH DAKOTA IN SEPTEMBER, 1955

U. S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION AND WELFARE
Office of Education

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OFFICE OF STUDENT GUIDANCE AND COUNSELING
ROBERT H. KNAPP, DIRECTOR
SEPTEMBER, 1959

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What happens to a typical class of freshmen entering the State University of South Dakota? How many graduate at the end of four years? How many drop by the wayside during the four-year period? How many drop out semester by semester? How many vocational choices do they average during their stay in college? Does high school rank figure in the picture? What about college ability test scores? These and other questions prompted a study of the group of freshmen entering in September, 1955.

The actual study involves 449 students—290 men and 159 women. However, 453 students actually entered but four died during the study, so we.e not included in the tabulations. All of the students were starting freshmen and had not been to college before. Individual cards were kept on each student and information was added each semester the student remained in school. The study has been continuous, then, over a four year period.

How Students Were Grouped

To assist in the study of the group, it was necessary to place the students in groups according to the number of semesters they were in attendance. In all of the figures which follow, the group designations are as follows:

Group 0 - those dropping from school before the end of the first semester.

Group 1 - those completing one semester.

Group 2 - those completing two semesters.

Group 3 - those completing three semesters.

Group 4 - those completing four semesters.

Group 5 - those completing five semesters.

Group 6 - those completing six semesters.

Group 7 - those completing seven semesters.

Group 8 - those completing eight semesters.

Numbers of Students Falling in Each of the Groups

Figure 1 shows the number of students falling in each of the groups and the percentage which they constitute of the total group. One hundred sixty-nine students or 37.6 per cent of the group did not return to the University the second year. In other words, 280 or 62.4 per cent returned after the first year for additional study. The nature of students—abilities, academic achievements, and frequency of choice or educational plans—will be presented in subsequent figures. These data will probably throw some light on reasons for discontinuance of school for at least part of the students.

Figure 1 discloses that 159 students or 35.4 per cent of the group attended eight semesters. This does not mean graduation. One hundred thirty-three or 29.6 per cent actually finished degrees in eight semesters or less. In this group of 133 students are 11 students who graduated before June, 1959, by attending summer

Figure 1

FREQUENCIES AND PER CENTS OF STUDENTS
DISTRIBUTED BY GROUPS

Groups	Male	Female	Total	Percent
Group 0	31	10	41	9.13
Group 1	27	17	44	9.8
Group 2	55	29	84	18.7
Group 3	14	3	17	3.78
Group 4	25	37	62	13.8
Group 5	7	7	14	3.1
Group 6	20	3	23	5.12
Group 7	4	1	5	1.1
Group 8	107	52	159	35.4
Totals	290	159	449	99.9

school or by carrying larger than regular loads. Of the remaining 21 students in the group attending eight semesters are many capable students who will continue their education and will eventually graduate. Also, it should be noted that an additional 22 students, who had attended less than eight semesters were in school the second semester 1958-59, which means that many of this group will continue and possibly graduate. Also in the group of 159 students attending eight semesters are four students enrolled in the Law School and one in the School of Medicine. These students will undoubtedly continue till graduation and will add, eventually, to the percentage of the original group who graduate. This study does not include those who have transferred to other colleges and perhaps have already graduated or will do so in the future.

Perhaps we should comment at this time upon the 62 students dropping from school upon completion of two years or four semesters. This group constitutes 13.8 per cent of the original group. In the group of 62 students are included 27 students completing terminal courses. There were 8 in the secretarial group and 19 in the two-year program in elementary education. The somewhat large group dropping at the end of two years is normal when courses of a terminal nature are included in the curricular offerings of the University.

High School Rank

Figure 2 gives information concerning high school rank for the various groups. Per cents of students falling in each of the quartiles are also given. Looking at the total group of 449 students, it is encouraging to note that 36.7 per cent fell in the upper quartile and only 15.9 per cent in the lowest quartile. Sixty-four and four-tenths per cent of the students fell in the upper half of their graduating classes.

Of particular interest is the large per cent of low ability students dropping out during the first semester as well as at the end of the first and second semesters.

Figure 2

HIGH SCHOOL RANK EXPRESSED IN QUARTILES AND PERCENTS FOR THE VARIOUS GROUPS

Groups	Number of Students	No Rank	Q_1	Per Cent	Q_2	Per Cent	Q_3	Per Cent	Q_4	Per Cent
Group 0	41	10	7	22.6	4	12.9	7	22.6	13	41.9
Group 1	44	9	9	25.7	12	34.2	5	14.3	9	25.7
Group 2	84	10	24	32.4	17	23.0	17	23.0	16	21.6
Group 3	17	2	4	26.6	4	26.6	6	40.0	1	6.7
Group 4	62	5	23	40.4	20	35.1	6	10.5	8	14.0
Group 5	14	3	2	18.1	5	45.4	0	00.0	4	36.4
Group 6	23	3	4	20.0	8	40.0	8	40.0	0	00.0
Group 7	5	1	1	25.0	0	00.0	1	25.0	2	50.0
Group 8	159	17	71	50.0	35	24.6	28	19.7	8	5.6
Total	449	60	145	37.3	105	26.9	78	20.1	61	15.7

Almost half, or 41.9 per cent of those dropping during the first semester were fourth quartile students so far as high school rank is concerned. Also, it is worth noting that 67.6 per cent of those dropping during the first semester were below the median of their high school graduating classes. Fear of failure, no doubt, prompted many to withdraw from school at this time. That ability to do successful work on the college level is predetermined, to some extent, by the quality of work done on the high school level is graphically portrayed when it is shown that only 5.6 per cent of those completing eight semesters were in the fourth quartile in their graduating classes. In fact, only 5 students, or 3.7 per cent of the students actually graduated in eight semesters.

Vocational goals of those dropping out during the first semester were as follows: pre-business 10, general 9, physical education 5, elementary education 4,

veterinary medicine 3, applied science 2, and one each for the following—pre-law, medicine, science, chemistry, advertising, sociology, geology, and dramatic art.

Scholastic Aptitude Scores

Figure 3 presents information concerning test scores earned on the American Council Psychological Examination for the various groups. Only total scores were used because a general measure of scholastic ability was all that was necessary. The scores were arranged by quartiles for the various groups.

Of those dropping from school during the first semester, 51.7 per cent had scores below the 25th percentile. In fact, 75.8 per cent of those dropping fell below the 50th percentile. These data coincide almost identically to the data on scholastic ability as shown on Group 0 in Figure 2.

It is encouraging to note, too, that only 16.7 per cent of those completing eight semesters fell in the fourth quartile on test scores.

Figure 3

ACE TOTAL SCORES ARRANGED BY QUARTILES AND PERCENTS FOR THE VARIOUS GROUPS

Groups	Number of Students	No Scores	Q_1	Per Cent	Q_2	Per Cent	Q_3	Per Cent	Q_4	Per Cent
Group 0	41	12	2	6.8	5	17.2	7	24.1	15	51.7
Group 1	44	6	5	13.2	10	26.3	10	26.3	13	34.2
Group 2	84	5	18	22.8	26	32.9	14	17.7	21	26.6
Group 3	17	0	1	5.8	3	17.6	8	47.0	5	29.4
Group 4	62	3	10	16.9	16	27.1	18	30.5	15	25.4
Group 5	14	1	2	15.4	6	46.2	3	23.1	2	15.4
Group 6	23	4	5	26.3	3	15.7	8	42.1	3	15.7
Group 7	5	0	0	00.0	2	40.0	2	40.0	1	20.0
Group 8	159	3	50	32.1	37	23.7	43	27.6	26	16.7
Total	449	34	93	22.4	108	26.0	113	27.2	101	24.3

Frequency of Educational and Vocational Choices

Figure 4 sheds some light on an often asked question—frequency of choice or change in educational and vocational plans. The data were arranged on number of choices rather than on the number of changes. Thinking that perhaps that sex of student might have a bearing on the results, number of choices for men and women were tabulated separately. Obviously, changes in plans do not show up until students had started the second semester of their stay in the University.

There were no significant differences in number of choices between men and women for the various groups. In fact, the average number of choices for all men was 1.34, and for all women was 1.30.

Almost three-fourths of both men and women made only one choice during their stay at the University. Sixty-eight and two tenths per cent of the men, and 61.5 per cent of the women attending eight semesters made only one choice.

It is significant, too, to note that no student made more than three choices.

The average number of choices seems to increase sharply for both men and women between the fifth and seventh semesters for some reason. Semesters five, six, and seven are troublesome semesters for many students. Failure to get into professional schools, or failure to make the grade after once admitted is no doubt at the bottom of this sharp increase in number of vocational choices. Stability seems to return to the group completing eight semesters for the averages for men and women are 1.37 and 1.46 respectively.

Academic Achievement

Figure 5 presents data concerning the grade-point averages for the various groups. The overall average for all students regardless of the number of semesters in attendance is 2.5. The two best averages appear for those completing four and eight semesters. We normally would expect those in the graduating group to carry

Figure 4

FREQUENCY OF CHOICE IN EDUCATIONAL AND VOCATIONAL PLANS FOR THE VARIOUS GROUPS

Group	Total Number of Students	Men							Women							Overall Average
		1	Per Cent	2	Per Cent	3	Per Cent	Ave.	1	Per Cent	2	Per Cent	3	Per Cent	Ave.	
Group 0	41	31	100	0	0	0	0	1.0	10	100	0	0	0	0	1.0	1.0
Group 1	44	28	100	0	0	0	0	1.0	16	100	0	0	0	0	1.0	1.0
Group 2	84	44	80	11	20	0	0	1.2	23	79.3	6	20.6	0	0	1.2	1.2
Group 3	17	8	57.1	5	35.7	1	7.14	1.5	3	100	0	0	0	0	1.0	1.41
Group 4	62	12	48	11	44	2	8.0	1.6	25	67.5	11	29.7	1	2.7	1.35	1.45
Group 5	14	3	42.8	1	14.2	3	42.8	2.0	3	42.8	4	57.1	0	0	1.57	1.78
Group 6	23	9	45	7	35	4	20	1.75	2	66.6	1	33.3	0	0	1.33	1.69
Group 7	5	1	25	1	25	2	50	2.25	0	0	1	100	0	0	2.0	2.2
Group 8	159	73	68.2	28	26.1	6	5.6	1.37	32	61.5	16	30.8	4	7.7	1.46	1.4
Total	449	209	72.0	64	22.0	18	6.2	1.34	114	71.6	39	24.5	5	3.14	1.30	1.33

Figure 5

GRADE-POINT AVERAGES FOR THE VARIOUS GROUPS

Groups	Number of Students	Hours Enrolled	Grade Points	Average
Group 0	41	-	-	-
Group 1	44	627	1023	1.63
Group 2	84	2492	5133	2.06
Group 3	17	742	1218	1.64
Group 4	62	3549	8782	2.47
Group 5	14	965	2169	2.25
Group 6	23	2004	4242	2.12
Group 7	5	497	979	1.97
Group 8	159	19,347	52,068	2.69
Total	449	30,223	75,614	2.50

the best average and this is born out in these data.

The four semester group also contains some outstanding students. Seven of the eight students finishing the secretarial course ranked in the upper quartile of their high school class and the eighth student in this group ranked in the second quartile.

The nineteen students completing the two-year elementary school program ranked as follows: eight were in the top quartile, seven were in the second quartile, three in the third quartile, and only one was found in the lowest quartile. These facts explain the 2.47 average for those completing four semesters.

Summary

Of the 449 students that entered the State University of South Dakota in September, 1955, 133 or 29.6 per cent finished bachelor degrees in eight semesters

or less. This percentage will increase considerably in the next few years as additional students move toward graduation. Many of those dropping out to enter the armed services for the required time will be re-entering and working toward degrees. Then, there are always those who must drop out and work for a while. It seems safe to predict that our percentage should approach the national average of 40 per cent without too much difficulty.

Students having limited scholastic ability seem to drop out rather rapidly in the initial stages of their college programs. Forty-one and nine-tenths per cent of those dropping from school during the first semester rank in the lowest one-fourth of their graduating classes. Only 5.6 per cent of those completing eight semesters fall in the lowest quartile of their graduating classes. Only five or 3.7 per cent of the 133 students completing degrees in eight semesters fell in the lowest quartile of their graduating classes. Forty-eight and eight-tenths per cent of those completing degrees ranked in the upper quartile of their high school classes and 69.9 per cent of those graduating ranked in the upper half of their classes. Scholastic aptitude scores as determined by the American Council on Education test confirms conclusions drawn on aptitude to do college work as determined by rank in graduating class.

Almost three-fourths of all students completing eight semesters finish with the original choice made at time of entrance. Frequency of choice seems to increase with those students in scholastic trouble. Only 23 of the 449 students made as many as three choices whereas 103 or nearly one-fourth of the group made two choices. The over-all average for all students is 1.33 choices.